

Title of Report:	Causeway Coast & Glens Draft Regional Priorities Response Document
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	18 th June 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Information
For Discussion In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity
Outcome	Enhancement of skills and job creation opportunities
Lead Officer	Head of Prosperity & Place

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to share with Members Causeway Coast & Glens draft Regional Priorities response document, for submission to the Department for Economy (DfE).

2.0 Overview

In January 2023, the DfE published a report in respect of the Independent Review of Invest NI. The review was undertaken by an Independent Review Panel chaired by Sir Michael Lyons. The objective of the review was to provide an independent assessment of Invest NI's efficiency and effectiveness and, looking forward, its capacity to strategically align with and operationally deliver DfE's economic vision. A key finding identified in the Lyon's review was that there was *'insufficient focus on the development of sub regional economies'*.

Since January 2024, DfE and Invest NI have been developing a new strategic approach to address the disparity in Northern Ireland's sub-regional economic performance. The strategy will have sub-regional economic targets and will identify how public-funded interventions, such as provision of industrial land and buildings, are used to address bespoke sub-regional challenges and inequalities.

A key action of the Strategy is for Invest NI to develop a Sub-Regional Economic Plan for Northern Ireland, with measurable targets, by September 2024. Specifically:

'The Department, in partnership with all relevant economic development stakeholders (in particular Councils and Further and Higher Education Institutions) will publish a Sub-Regional Economic Plan for Northern Ireland which includes sub-regional targets.'

Over the last four months, Invest NI and DfE officials have been engaging with Elected Members; Causeway's Economic Advisory Group and Council's Prosperity & Place team in identifying key strategic economic priorities and investment/value propositions for the borough. Following a final workshop with all key stakeholders on the 23rd May 2024, a draft Regional Priorities response document was agreed. See **Annex A** for further details.

The Leisure & Development Committee will be updated at key milestones as the Sub-Regional Economic Plan for NI is being developed.

Annex A – Causeway Coast & Glens Draft Regional Priorities Response Document

Top Economic Priorities agreed by Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council's Leisure & Development Committee and Causeway Economic Advisory Group.

Which strategies are they linked to? (e.g. Council's Economic Strategy, Labour Market Partnerships, Community Plans, 10x, City & Growth Deals?)

Short Term

- Key strategic roads/ infrastructure (NI Water & NIE) improvements across the borough.
- Development of new Enhanced Investment Zone for the Borough as part of the recent UK Government's £150 million commitment for Northern Ireland.
- A clearly defined 'value proposition' and promotion of same to encourage investment (indigenous and international) to the Borough.
- Increase demand from businesses in the Borough for mainstream government support, particularly new business start-ups and early stage growth. (Partnership Pathway initiatives / Bespoke Solutions).
- Enhanced innovation across key priority sectors as identified within Council's Economic Development Strategy – Recovery & Renewal i.e. advanced manufacturing; engineering; construction; financial business and professional services; retail; tourism and hospitality; agri-food; and sustainable energy.
- Greater linkages / partnership working with Higher Education and Further Education Colleges, and the lifting of the MASN cap at Ulster University Coleraine to increase the skills provision in the region to meet the current and future needs of businesses operating in our priority growth sectors.

Medium Term

- Growth Deal - £72m capital investment – Innovation Pillar Projects. To support existing and new businesses (FDI and spin-outs or new businesses) with the creation of high valued jobs/ GVA/ skills/ employment/ and increase productivity to align with Growth Deal projects and other regional initiatives.
- Greater availability of enterprise development land/sites across the Borough as current demand from businesses outstrips the limited supply of land available.

Long Term

- To develop tourism initiatives that will encourage growth in specific sectors and enhance the area's tourism provision; as well as generating more visitors, motivating them to spend longer and visit throughout the year i.e. 4/5 Star Hotel Accommodation; signature attractions and facilities across the area to convert day to staying visitors and increase dwell time.
- Sustainable Energy – development of SOLAR PVC Farms to make the Borough one of the UK's most sustainable regions by 2035; ensuring that sustainability and the development of a vibrant and growing economy go together.

Strategies:

- CCG Recovery and Renewal – An Economic Strategy for the Causeway Coast & Glens
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Causeway_Coast_and_Glens_Socio_Economic_Profile_2020.pdf
- CCG A Better Future Together - Delivery Plan for Causeway Coast & Glens Community Plan 2017 – 2030
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Community_Delivery_Plan_cover_WR.pdf
- CCG Corporate Strategy 2021 – 2025
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/Appendix_Draft_Corporate_Strategy_Version_5_18.1.21.pdf
- CCG Digital Strategy
https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/uploads/general/CCGBC_Digital_Strategy_-_Final.pdf
- DoF City & Growth Deals <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/city-and-growth-deals>
- DfE New Economic Vision (Feb 2024) <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/statement-minister-murphy-economic-vision>

Top 3-4 Wider Priorities at Council Level (Multi Departmental Remit)

1. Strategic roads/ infrastructure (NI Water & NIE) across the borough including the Ballykelly by-pass; Coleraine Harbour; A26 dualling extension; dualling Limavady-Coleraine-Derry; and Ballycastle Harbour.
2. Growth Deal - £72m capital investment – Infrastructure & Regeneration Pillar Projects.
3. Compulsory purchase powers to support the delivery of a range of development, regeneration, and infrastructure projects in the public interest.
4. Development of Sports / Leisure facilities across the borough.

Across all Priorities - which strategies are they linked to:

Strategies:

- DfE New Economic Vision (February 2024)
- CCG Recovery and Renewal – An Economic Strategy for the Causeway Coast & Glens
- CCG Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2023-2024
- CCG A Better Future Together - Delivery Plan for Causeway Coast & Glens Community Plan 2017 – 2030
- TNI Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland - 10 Year Plan
- DfI Draft Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030
- DoH Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together
- DfE Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland

Top 3-4 Challenges at Council Level

1. Developing new employment sectors outside of current predominantly lower value-added employment sectors in the region, (tourism/hospitality/retail), that provide high-skilled/high paid jobs. For example, in line with Recovery & Renewal (i.e. sustainable energy, digital (Agri-tech, fin-tech, med-tech, ed-tech etc.), agri-food, health & life sciences.
2. Increasing early-stage entrepreneurial activity levels.
3. Suitable business units (appropriate to demand i.e. small to medium units)/ reimagining the high-street
4. Lack of investment in key roads and infrastructure across the Borough.
5. Increasing number of vacant premises in our town centres and reduced footfall, with competition coming from out-of-town Retail Parks, the re-imagining of our High Streets is important.
6. Changes to Enterprise Zone categorization.

Council Indicative Indicators/Metrics currently/Could being used

How are they aligned to 10x?

Indicative Indicators	Currently Used by Council	Could be Used by Council
Local Economy		
Employment/Unemployment Rates	✓	
Educational Attainment	✓	
Local migration		✓
Cost of Residential Properties		✓
Social Housing		✓
Cost of Living Trends	✓	
Health & Well-Being	✓	
New Business Registrations	✓	
SME Growth Trends/Productivity	✓	
Exports/Imports	✓	
Trade and Investment Opportunities		✓
Median Earnings	✓	
Skills Gaps	✓	
Business Satisfaction Surveys	✓	
Processing of Planning Applications	✓	
Land Availability/Potential for Development		✓
Derelict Buildings	✓	
Congestion (journey times)		✓
Bus/Train Journeys Originating within the Borough		✓
Road Maintenance		✓
Accessibility of public/ active travel	✓	
Value for Money Outcomes re: Council investments	✓	

Digital Transformation (Infrastructure, Advanced Technologies)		✓
Tourism Trends	✓	
<i>Environmental Sustainability</i>		
Climate Change Initiatives		✓
Carbon Reduction (Council Assets)	✓	
Carbon Reduction (Commercial Premises)		✓
Air quality	✓	
Improved street and environmental cleanliness	✓	
Fuel Poverty	✓	
Municipal Waste to Land Fill	✓	

Council relies on external stakeholders to provide additional insights when monitoring and evaluating current interventions. Improvements could be made to a number of these metrics to enable Council and external stakeholders to further develop innovative interventions which support the three pillars of the 10x strategy (innovation, inclusive growth and sustainability). Up-to-date data availability is a constant issue when developing and analysing effectiveness of interventions.

Commonalities if looked at through geographic INI regional office structure lens (or other).

Demographics

- Causeway Coast & Glens represent 7% of the Northern Ireland population.
- 63% of residents are of working age (NI average, 63%)
- 69% of the economically active are employed (NI average, 70%)
- 10% of the economically active are self-employed (NI average, 12%)
- 5% of NI total jobs are found in the borough (42,424 jobs)
- 75% of jobs are created in the private sector (NI average, 73%)
- The median annual earning for those residing in the borough is £24,825 (NI average £26,182)
- 14% of residents have no qualifications (NI average, 12%), 45% have attained a NVQ at Level 4 or below (NI average, 46%), 41% have attained higher than a NVQ Level 4 (NI average, 42%).
- 8% of NI businesses are registered in the borough, with 91% being micro businesses.
- 92% of new businesses survive their first year of trading (NI average, 93%)
- GVA per head increased 2% between 2016-20 (NI average, 13% increase)
- GDP per head increased 1% between 2016-20 (NI average, 5%).
- Ranked fifth out of the 11 Councils when it comes to early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (2019-2021)
- With over 144,436 hectares farmed in the area in 2022 the region has 2,621 farms, representing 10% of the NI total.
- Causeway Coast and Glens suffered a 15% reduction in export sales, with sales of £394 million in 2019 down to £335 million in 2022.

Geography

Similar to other Council areas, Causeway Coast & Glens is primarily a rural Council area which presents several challenges including access to key transport links, educational underachievement, poor broadband/mobile connectivity, and access to healthcare.

Investment

There are four City/Growth Deals investing c.£1.3 billion into the local economies. All four Deals aim to create economic conditions that will foster economic growth and prosperity. Approximately 40 projects are spread across innovation, digital and tourism/regeneration themes. All projects are set in the context of the Economic Recovery Action Plan, 10x Decade of Innovation, and the Energy Strategy to decarbonise Northern Ireland energy sector by 2050.

Accommodation

Causeway Coast & Glens is limited by the availability of suitable business units, conferencing facilities and premium hotel accommodation. Outside of Belfast and Derry, this is a common obstacle to attracting inward investment.

Linkages

Given the similarities across industries within NI, Causeway Coast & Glens sees additional benefit in partnering with other Councils to promote our offerings to potential investors on a wider scale. Developing synergies instead of competing. In addition, developing cross partnerships for future investment opportunities and exploring the potential of public sector and third sector partnership working.